That Devilish Charm

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/16312349.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, implied Will Graham/omc
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, OMC, Will Graham's Dogs
Additional Tags:	Will is a determined guy, Hannibal is a douche, Hannibal Loves Will, Will thinks it's a good plan to make Hannibal jealous, mentions of Bedelia
Language:	English
Series:	Part 4 of The Devil Wants His Due
Stats:	Published: 2018-10-16 Words: 4,371 Chapters: 1/1

That Devilish Charm

by SingingInTheRaiin

Summary

Will has finished recovering from his encounter with Tobias Budge, though he still hasn't been medically cleared to go back on the field, which leaves him with just a bit too much time on his hands. And with Hannibal suddenly playing hard to get, Will has his work cut out for him in getting the devil to completely fall for him. (How does he not realize that the devil fell for him ages ago?)

It had been over a month since Will's release from the hospital, and Hannibal hadn't made a single inappropriately timed visit. Of course he knew that he should be happy about that, since it meant that he could finally get some peace and quiet, though at this point his body seemed used to waking up at odd hours, and he still couldn't sleep all the way through the night. But for some strange reason, Will was almost disappointed that Hannibal hadn't come by. It made it feel like Hannibal had lost interest in him. Not that Will wanted Hannibal to be interested in him, of course!

Will did have a vague memory of a conversation with Hannibal when he'd been drugged with the good stuff back in the hospital, but he couldn't actually remember what words had been exchanged. Maybe he had said something to completely offend Hannibal, and that's why the man (?) was avoiding him.

Of course it would be easy enough, and the grown-up thing to do, to just call Hannibal and talk to him. But Will didn't want Hannibal to think that he was desperate for attention, because that was absolutely not true. And it's not like he missed Hannibal's cooking, because no sane person would ever enjoy eating food cooked by a cannibal, even if they made sure that they weren't actually eating any human meat. And he didn't miss Hannibal's dumb suits that would look ridiculous on literally anyone else, or his stupid condescending voice, or- dammit.

Will scowled as he yanked his phone out of his pocket with more force than necessary, and scrolled through his contacts list until he reached Hannibal's number. He slammed his thumb down on the call button, and waited impatiently. That jerk let the phone ring way longer than necessary before he finally answered. "Ah, Will, I wasn't expecting a call from you." He spoke in that typical pleasant voice of his, which Will hated.

"Like hell you weren't. Just ghosting me all of a sudden like that, just to- what? Are you laughing at me?"

Hannibal cleared his throat. "Of course I would never do such a thing."

Will narrowed his eyes, even though he knew that Hannibal wouldn't be able to see it. "I seriously hate you sometimes. Will you please just tell me why you haven't spoken to me since I saw you in the hospital? It's not like I really care about talking to you, but I wouldn't want to find out that you went and killed someone without my approval because you got too impatient."

"You don't have to worry about that, dearest. I feast on human flesh purely for the enjoyment of it, of knowing that I am far superior to those pigs, and there is no need driving me to continue. I am more than happy to wait for an approved name from you, and then to cook up something quite delicious for myself and Bedelia."

Will furrowed his eyebrows. "Bedelia? Who's that?"

Hannibal let out a soft chuckle. "Have I neglected to mention her before? She is my therapist."

Will got up to walk into the kitchen and rummage around in one of the cabinets for some whiskey, which he was sure he would need in order to get through the rest of this conversation. “The devil needs a therapist? Are you traumatized by all the people you’ve killed?” He balanced his phone between his ear and shoulder so that he could use both hands to pour himself a drink.

Hannibal laughed again, and Will wondered when his life had become one where he felt glad to bring amusement to someone like Hannibal. Well, not glad necessarily. But he preferred to have Hannibal be amused with him than to have Hannibal be angry with him. “She and I have been friends for many years now, and I enjoy my conversations with her.”

Will paused to take a long gulp of his drink before setting the glass back down on the counter to pour out some more. He was glad that there was only a very slight burn, which made sense, since the doctor had cleared him to be able to drink alcohol again. “Does she know about who you really are?”

“Perhaps on some level. I believe she is aware of my hobby, though she would never dare to say it out loud. But I don’t think my real job has ever crossed her mind as anything more than a silly joke.” He hummed thoughtfully to himself, and Will took the opportunity to gulp down more whiskey while he waited for Hannibal to say whatever else was obviously on his mind. “Now that I’m thinking of, I suppose that it has been too long since the last dinner party I threw, and I’m sure that Bedelia would greatly appreciate an invitation to such an event. Something small, close friends only.”

Then he went silent, instead of extending an invitation to Will. It’s not like Will wanted to attend some stupid dinner party thrown by Hannibal, but he found the lack of invitation to be odd because he knew that before he’d been mostly killed by Tobias Budge, Hannibal wouldn’t have hesitated to use any chance to get to spend time with Will.

But Will wasn’t going to just invite himself along to such an event. Maybe Hannibal really had moved on, and he wanted to pursue this Bedelia woman as his consort instead. And that was perfectly fine by Will, because he didn’t want all of Hannibal’s focus on him all of the time.

But what if she didn’t have any restrictions about who Hannibal was allowed to kill? If she knew that he killed people, and had known him for years, she should have said something a long time ago to the police about it. Hannibal said that Bedelia wasn’t aware of him being the devil, which meant she couldn’t have made any deals with him about keeping silent. So she chose not to report him, and there could be any number of reasons as to why she would do that, but none of them worked to make Will feel any better.

Of course he didn’t want to be the object of Hannibal’s obsession, but since he was in a position to be helping other people, wasn’t it his obligation to do so? If he kept Hannibal’s attention on himself, he could make sure that innocent people weren’t being killed. And then he’d still die of old age to avoid becoming Hannibal’s consort, so really, it was a win-win. He finished off the rest of the whiskey from his glass before finally responding to Hannibal. “You wouldn’t happen to have room at your table for one more, would you?”

The sheer delight in Hannibal's voice almost made Will regret his decision. "There is always room for you in my home, Will. It would be my honor to cook for you again."

Will sighed. "Yeah, that's great. Now can you please tell me what happened in the hospital? I barely remember anything because of all the painkillers."

"Hm. I seem to recall something about you saying that you would be the one to pursue me from now on. Until you called today, I had been beginning to think that you had already changed your mind."

Will couldn't imagine ever saying something like that, but he also knew that painkillers made people act a bit crazy and say or do things that they wouldn't normally. He also knew that Hannibal wasn't above lying about the small details if it would help him get what he wanted. So really, there was only about a fifty percent chance that Hannibal was telling the truth. "Did I really say that I wanted to be the one to go after you? I'm not sure that that sounds like something that I would say, Hannibal."

"Are you doubting my word?" Of course, Hannibal didn't sound offended by any potential accusations in Will's statement. The bastard just sounded amused and slightly intrigued, just like he always seemed to when talking to Will.

Will sighed. "Of course not. How could I ever doubt the word of someone as trustworthy as you? Anyways, do you already have the details of this dinner party planned out?"

"I'm afraid not," Hannibal answered in a tone that made it clear just how not sorry he was. "I'd be more than happy to give you those details if they are all worked out before the next time you drop by."

Will arched one eyebrow. "The next time that I drop by? Aren't you the one always coming and visiting me without asking permission first, and just being a general nuisance to my life?"

He wasn't sure why he even bothered asking, since he knew that Hannibal was all too capable of turning any question around onto the person who had asked it. "If I were truly as you just described, then I'm afraid that that would make me a rather rude person."

"I think you'd have to at least be a person to qualify for that," Will said with a soft snort. "Whatever. I guess this means that I will be visiting you at some point in the future. Which I'm sure seems like just the most horrible prospect to you. I'll talk to you later, Hannibal."

He could practically hear Hannibal's grin over the phone. "Yes, I do look forward to hearing from you again, Will." Which meant that Hannibal was just going to wait until Will sucked it up and called him first. He wondered whether Hannibal had lost interest in him and could no longer be bothered to make any efforts himself, or if the man had decided, for whatever reason, that everything would be more amusing if Will had to be the one who appeared to be doing the chasing. Too bad it was so impossible to ever figure out what was going on in Hannibal's mind.

Will hung up, since he knew that Hannibal wasn't going to let him get in the last word here anyways, and then poured himself some more whiskey. Maybe it was a bit excessive to be drinking so much just to get through a single little conversation with Hannibal, but Will decided that he was completely justified in his actions, as long as he made sure that this was his last glass.

Once he was finished, Will couldn't think of anything in particular that he needed to get done, so he decided to settle down, pull out his laptop, and search the internet for ways to impress someone like Hannibal. He figured that if he did something grand enough, he would be able to entirely recapture Hannibal's attention, just in case that was the problem. Not only would it save the world from having Hannibal under the influence of his Bedelia, but it would give Will the opportunity to use Hannibal.

That felt like a pretty familiar thought, and Will couldn't help wondering if it was something he'd thought about when drugged to the gills in the hospital. Too bad he hadn't had the foresight to just record himself for his entire stay so that he could know everything that had gone down. Instead, he was stuck with the puzzle of whether or not Hannibal's recounting of things could be trusted, and rethinking up all of the brilliant ideas that he must've had.

After he finished pondering the benefits of hospital patients being able to record themselves, he turned his attention back to all the options that had come up from his internet search. Several different blogs claimed that it wasn't about how much money he spent, but about showing that he truly cared about his lover. Will quickly exited out of those ones.

Then there was a site that claimed to be able to share the top fifty romantic date ideas. Will narrowed his eyes warily, but ended up bookmarking it. Of course he didn't want to date Hannibal, or get anywhere even close to dating Hannibal. But he knew that in a weird way, Hannibal wanted to date him, which meant that if he occasionally put together a nice outing on his own, it would hopefully earn him some brownie points, or whatever the gourmet equivalent of brownies was.

He ended up sifting through several other potentially helpful sites, but in the end, decided that none of them would actually help him win over Hannibal. Too bad there weren't any sites specifically for people who had gotten the devil to claim them as a consort, but then lost the devil's interest and was now trying to get it back. He knew because he had searched for something like that.

Will slammed his laptop shut, and decided to just call it a day. As Will peeled off his clothes and headed into the bathroom to brush his teeth, he decided that it would be well within reason to wait a week to go and drop by Hannibal's house. Or maybe it would be more appropriate to go to his office. It was hard to know where to draw the lines between getting Hannibal's attention back on him, and not giving out any weird messages about what he might or might not be willing to do with Hannibal.

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Just before Will stepped foot inside the office, he glanced down at his arms, and it occurred to him that maybe making brownies had been a bad idea. He'd never been the best cook, which was why he mostly survived off of microwavable meals, fish, and whiskey, but for some

reason he'd suddenly been determined to make brownies. Maybe because of the 'brownie points' joke he'd made before. But now he was worried that Hannibal wouldn't appreciate the gift, because of course he would be able to make a far superior dish.

Before Will could actually turn around and leave to go home, though, there was a slight whoosh of air, and the door burst open, smacking right into Will and sending him flying back to land on his ass on the ground. The tray in his arms tumbled down, sending a torrent of crumbled brownie bits to rest in the grass beside him.

The person who'd just knocked Will sideways rushed over and knelt down next to him, looking genuinely concerned. "I am so sorry about that! Are you okay?"

Will reached out to pick up his glasses, and then looked up at the stranger. The man had an earnest look on his face, and Will blinked a few times when he realized that it was a rather handsome face at that. A chiseled jaw with a light dusting of stubble, a nose that looked like it had been broken before, warm brown eyes with hazel flecks in them, and a faint smattering of freckles on his cheeks and across the bridge of his nose.

Of course he was just staring like some kind of idiot. Will quickly averted his gaze before nodding once. "I'm fine."

The stranger stood up, and then reached down one arm to offer to Will. Will took the hand, and let himself be pulled back up to his feet. He wiped his glasses off with the bottom of his shirt, and then started to slide them back onto his nose. He immediately realized that that was a bad idea, because his nose was pretty sore from being smashed into like that. He winced, and then dropped the hand that was holding the glasses.

The stranger looked over at the fallen brownies, and then back at Will. "It looks like I did some serious damage. I could have broken your nose, or something, and you don't even have any brownies to eat as a comfort food. Please, let me take you to the hospital. If you have an appointment with Dr. Lecter, I'm sure he'd understand you cancelling on such short notice for a medical emergency."

It's not like Will had any offering left to give Hannibal, and he certainly wasn't going to make it look like he was an option. "I don't actually have an appointment. It was just going to be a surprise visit, which means it can easily be rescheduled and no one will be the wiser." He glanced up towards one of the windows in Hannibal's office, and wondered if he was being watched at the moment.

Will hadn't wanted to get Alana involved in everything because he honestly cared about her, and wanted what was best for her. But this complete stranger could easily be a disposable pawn. Of course, ideally nobody would get hurt because of Will, but if it had to happen, he'd rather it be someone he had no investment in. Maybe this was a bad idea caused by brain damage, but Will couldn't help thinking that jealousy just might be the way to force Hannibal to look at Will again instead of Bedelia.

The stranger nodded. "Makes sense." Then he held out his hand to Will again. "I'm Sam Piper."

“Will Graham.”

Sam smiled. “Nice to meet you, though I do wish it could be under circumstances where I didn’t possibly just give you a concussion.”

Will shrugged. “Make it up to me by buying me a coffee after we’re done at the hospital?”

Sam’s smile grew. “I’d be more than happy to. Come on.” He led Will to an expensive looking sports car, which served as a reminder of the type of clients that usually went to Hannibal for therapy. They were all rich, though Will supposed that he couldn’t just assume that all rich people were jerks, even if it did seem that way at times. And Sam seemed nice enough so far, even though obviously Will didn’t think that a minute or two was enough time to get to know anybody.

He slid into the passenger seat of the car, and decided that it was even better this way, because even if Hannibal hadn’t directly witnessed what had gone down, he would be able to see Will’s car in the parking lot, so he would know that Will had stopped by, but not actually gone inside.

They drove to the nearest hospital, and headed inside the emergency room, even though Will insisted that it was just going to end up being an expensive visit to find out that nothing was wrong. Sam then insisted that he would pay for the visit, since it was his fault in the first place, and that had been the end of that.

It was a slow day in the ER, and Will was able to see a doctor in about half an hour. A few quick checks, and it was determined that his nose wasn’t broken, and he didn’t have a concussion, but that he should try to take it easy until the swelling went down. Not that Will had much choice, since he was still on medical leave from working in the field, and teaching wasn’t exactly the most stimulating activity. He was then given an ice pack, and sent on his way.

They left the hospital and got back into Sam’s car. “So where did you want to go for coffee? You name the place, and we’ll be there.”

Will thought about it for a moment, and then gave directions to a little cafe that was hidden well enough that only the most dedicated of hipsters had discovered it. The whole time they were driving, Will held the ice pack over his mouth as well as his nose so that he would have an excuse to not do much talking. He couldn’t deny that there was a tiny flutter of guilt in his stomach. The worst part was that he wasn’t sure if he felt guilty about potentially endangering a kind stranger, or if he felt guilty about trying to make Hannibal jealous.

They reached their destination all too soon, and Will tossed the ice pack into one of the trash cans that lined the sidewalks before following Sam inside the building. Will sat down at a private little corner table after asking Sam for nothing but a cup of black coffee with a couple of extra espresso shots. He figured that he could use the caffeine, since he hadn’t slept very well the night before. He’d stayed up too late thinking about what he could bring to Hannibal’s, and what he should say to make himself sound the least amount of desperate possible.

Sam made his way over to the table just a couple minutes later, and put Will's cup down in front of him. "I hope you know that that drink may very well kill you."

Will shrugged as he picked it up to take a sip, not caring that it was still hot enough to scald his tongue. "I've survived worse."

He mentally winced at bringing up anything so morbid, but Sam just tilted his head curiously. "Oh? Well now you have to tell me. Unless you really don't want to, in which case, feel free to completely ignore me."

Will sighed. "No, it's alright. It's not really that big of a deal, but right now I'm on medical leave from the field because I almost died." He shifted down the top of his turtleneck sweater to show off the freshly scarred skin.

Instead of looking grossed out, Sam looked intrigued. "What do you do for a living that could lead to an injury like that?"

"FBI. Special agent. A criminal got the upper hand against me and tried to strangle me with piano wire."

Sam frowned. "That can't be an easy thing to deal with. Now I'm extra sorry that I hit you with that door, because you don't deserve any more injuries."

Will felt a bit awkward, and wasn't even subtle in his attempt to change the subject. "So what do you do?" Even though Sam was obviously smart enough to realize what Will was doing, he just went along with it.

"I'm a mechanical engineer, inventor, and self-made millionaire. I know that that sounds a bit braggy to say, but I've always heard that one should be proud of their achievements."

Well Will could certainly get behind the idea of someone being rich because they'd earned it themselves, even if he did still think that no single person needed a million dollars or more. "I'd brag too if I were you. Sounds like you've led a pretty impressive life. Must be good for getting dates."

Sam shrugged with one shoulder. "Or I guess I could just keep recklessly opening doors, since it's bound to lead to me smacking into a cute one." He gave Will a pointed look.

That seemed to answer the question of whether Sam had any interest in men. It was always awkward to actually flirt with people, and then follow through with them, but truthfully, he hadn't been with another person in a while, and even an antisocial man with the devil on his tail had certain physical needs. If Sam was interested, it was best for everyone to make this a one-time only thing. It would give Will a way to scratch an itch while also hopefully making Hannibal jealous, without actually getting involved enough with Sam to make Hannibal hurt the man. Of course, it was always tough to say for sure how these things could play out, but Will was fairly certain that this was a simple enough situation.

He leaned forward across the table, and forced himself to make eye contact with Sam. "Well I guess it was a lucky day for both of us, because it's not often I find myself swept off my feet

by a handsome man."

"I think it was mostly the door that swept you off your feet," Sam pointed out with a soft chuckle. "But I can't deny that it was a lucky day for us both." He leaned back in his seat to take a sip of his coffee, which looked sickeningly sweet even from where Will was sitting. "So, Will, why won't you tell me about yourself?"

Will managed a smile that was almost genuine, and leaned back in his seat as well. "I'm not really all that interesting, and I wouldn't even know where to begin. Why don't you start?"

Sam grinned. "I think I can do that."

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Will started the long drive home wondering if he had done anything wrong. Sam had definitely seemed interested in him, to the point where they'd even exchanged numbers, but he hadn't seemed interested in having sex. Maybe Will had been misreading things and they had only been working on building up a friendship? Or maybe Sam was just one of the few decent guys in the world who wasn't only looking for sex? He had certainly seemed decent enough while they were talking with each other.

He couldn't stop thinking about the encounter even as he pulled into his driveway. Was he leading Sam on by going into this knowing that he didn't want a relationship out of it? And what did someone like Sam see in someone like Will anyways? If Sam honestly was into Will, then that meant there were two wealthy, attractive, intelligent, successful men who liked him like that. He couldn't for the life of him figure out what they saw in him.

At least the pack of dogs that eagerly greeted him when he stepped inside made sense to him. He provided them with food and a home and affection, so it made sense that they would like him. Too bad people could never be as simple as dogs. And someone like Hannibal, who didn't even really count as a person, was even more complicated than most.

He reached up absent-mindedly to lightly press his fingers against the scar on his neck. Maybe he was in way over his head here. But he was determined to get through this in one piece, without any eternal vows to Hannibal, and without letting Hannibal date someone who wouldn't stop him from murdering anyone in his path. This wasn't going to be easy, but Will was determined to win.

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